6.

A Farewel to Popery:

8.22.25

IN A

LETTER

TO

Dr. *NICHOLAS*,

VICE-CHANCELLOR of *OXFORD*, and WARDEN of *NEW-COLLEGE*, from *W. H.* M. D. lately Fellow of the same College.

SHEWING,

The true Motives that with-drew him to the *Romish Religion*, and the reasons of his *Return* to the *Church* of *England*: Concluding with some short Reflections concerning the Great Duty of *Charity*.

Licensed, *Jan.* the 15th. 1679.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishops-Head* in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, 1679.

8.22.25

A Farthel to Popery:

IN A

LETTER

TO

Dr. NICHOLAS,

Vice-Chancellor of OXFORD, and Warden of NEW-COLLEGE, from W. H. M. D. lately Fellow of the same College.

SHEWING,

1017:90

The true Motives that with-drew him to the *Romish Religion*, and the reasons of his *Return* to the *Church of England*: Concluding with some short Reflections concerning the Great Duty of *Charity*.

Licensed, *Jan.* the 15th. 1679.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishops-Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1679.

A FAREWEL to POPERY,

IN

A Letter to Dr. *Nicholas*, Vice-Chancellor of *Oxford*, and Warden of *New-College*, from *W. H.* M. D. lately Fellow of the same Colledge, &c.

SIR,

THOUGH I was not so happy to live under your *Government*, and thereby take so near a prospect of your *Merit* as my *Fellow Collegiates* have often told me they do; yet some of your worthy acts tending to the good of our *University*, and best establishment of *Learning* and *Virtue* together, have raised you Admirers, even where you may least imagine: And if I should here take occasion, or presume to speak of the *Piety* of your *Life*, the *Solidness* of your

Judgment, the *Gravity* of your *Perſon*, or your *prudent Conduct* in all particulars of your *Government*, I muſt quite lay aſide my intended deſign, and write a Volum on purpoſe.

Therefore only Congratulating the diſcreet choice of our *Univerſity* and *College*, in a *Perſon* ſo fitted for the government of both, and deſiring your favourable conſtruction of what I write, ſhall endeavour to make them both ſome amends for the *ſcandal* I may perhaps have occaſioned by my *indiſcreet conduct* in matters of *Religion*: Such as give a *publick Scandal* ſhould do a *publick Penance*; and I'm contented to undergo it, as I am ſure I muſt, in the *Malicious cenſures* of *Roman-Catholicks*; for 'tis very well worth the while to endure that, and much more for the diſcharge of a *good Conſcience*, which is all I chiefly aim at in this matter, though indeed 'twill be a comfortable addition too, that I ſhall be fully reſtored to the good Opinion of thoſe, among whom I was firſt and beſt Principled.

Nor can I at all doubt this laſt good effect, if I either conſider the *real Innocence* of my *actions*, relating to *Religion*, or the *goodneſs* and *well-wiſhes* that I have been often told my *Fellow-Collegiates* have all along expreſt towards me.

My own *Innocence* will, I hope, ſufficiently appear by giving the world a clear and true account of the firſt *motives* of my favouring the *Popiſh* way, my *behaviour* ſince I eſpouſed their *Cauſe*, and what *reaſons* have induced my *judgment* to fix again upon the *old foundation*: This I ſhall do with much *ſincerity*

cerity and *candor*, and ſhall ſpeak the utmoſt truth according to the beſt of my *memory*, and the faithfuleſt information my own *Conſcience* can give me.

'Twill ſeem very ſtrange that too much *Charity* & *Submiſſion* ſhou'd happen to drive a man head-long into the moſt *Uncharitable* and *Froudeſt Church* in the World; and yet ſo it was with me. You know, *Sir*, that our *College* has had the fortune to retain greater and more lively *Memorials* of *Popery* in *Statues* and *Pictures* on the Gates, and in the Chappel, than any other throughout the *Univerſity*. Thoſe ſights did often put me in mind of that *Religion*, and finding the beſt Divines of the *Church of England* unanimouſly agree that thoſe *Superſtitions* with many others, had prevailed over the World at leaſt a thouſand years before the *Reformation*, it ſtruck my *heart* with a great deal of *Compaſſion*, and made me often wiſh that *Roman-Catholicks* were in the right, and we in the wrong, that the more People might thereby be *ſaved*. This *Charitable conſideration* did by degrees work further and further; but before ever I ſaw any one of that Perſwaſion, or read any one of their Books, I did long to be Convinced that they were in the right way, for the ſake and general good of Mankind: So that by mere chance lighting upon a *Popiſh Book* in one of our Chambers, I opened it with all the haſt and greedineſs in the world, and read it with as much *joy* as if I had found a *Treaſure* beyond value. I was impatient to be drawn from the *Book*, either by Prayers, Meals, Viſits, or any other

other accident: It over-joy'd me to find that they had ſome *Arguments* on their ſide; and by that time I had got half way in the *Book*, I turn'd a *Zealous Champion* for them, took their part vigorouſly whereſoever I chanced on, or could make an occaſion; and from that time was perfectly deaf to any thing that could be ſaid againſt them, by the beſt *wit* or *judgment* that either *College* or *Univerſity* could oppoſe me with in private Converſation. Now that which amazes me ſometimes, is, that I could poſſibly have ſuch a *tendency* of *ſpirit*, ſo ſtrong an *impulſe* on my *affections*, notwithſtanding that I had not one *Relation* in the World, not one *Friend* or *Acquaintance* of that Perſwaſion I ſo ſtrangely *affected*. And conſidering how innocently I was deluded, upon no worſe *Motive* than too much *Charity*, I can promiſe my ſelf the eaſier Reconcilement to all ſuch as have been ſcandalized at me upon the account of Religion.

And as *Charity* had this *influence* upon me, ſo I hope I can in ſome ſincerity ſay that a little *Humility* incident to my natural temper, made me think it *Duty* and *Conſcience* to follow the guidance of thoſe *God* had placed over us in matters of *Religion*: And for that reaſon was ever very *Zealous* for the *Authority* of the *Church of England*, ſo far that I thought any little breach of the *Canons* and *Conſtitutions* to be a kind of *Sacrilege*. This temper made me the fitter to be workt upon by a Romiſh Book, called the *The Guide in Controverſies*, eſpecially the 5th. part being a *Vindication of the Council of* Trent. About this time I hapned to receive

receive much encouragement to proceed in leaving my *College*, for ſake of the *Religion* I was ſo wholly bent on, from the Diſcourſes and Example of Mr. *R.* of *Magdalen College*, a moſt *ingenious* and *honeſt Man*, whom I can never but have a *particular reſpect* for, becauſe I know he had no manner of *temporal motive* to quit his *All*, beſides the *preſervation* of a *good Conſcience*. He meant well, I really think, both to me, and in what elſe he gave offence; therefore I ſhall never tax him *unkindly* for what he meant *honeſtly*, but wiſh him *heartily* well, though I imagine him to be gone beyond all reach of hopes of any *return* to the *Church* he was born in.

Whatever was the matter, 'tis very true that I was wound up to ſo high a *Zeal* in thoſe days, that if I can now gueſs at, or remember the *Conſtitution* then of my *mind*, I could have choſen to have beg'd my Bread, or undergone any manner of Afflictions in that Perſwaſion, rather than to have enjoyed the greateſt plenty imaginable (the *Empire of the World*, I did not forbear frequently to ſay) continuing a *Proteſtant*.

And this *Zeal* made me extraordinary deſirous of *Travelling* abroad, that I might the better ſee the *Church* in its *Glory*, as well as in its *truer colours*. *France* was the place I ſoon fixt in, and I am very glad I did ſo, becauſe I conceive the *Gallican Church* to be the beſt *Principled* in *Government*, & the moſt *moderate* of any that are *Roman-Catholick*. *Janſenius* an exemplary good Man, has there a great many followers, who ſtoutly maintain the cauſe of *Vir-*

tue

true and *good Life*, against the powerful contrivances of the *Jesuits* and their Faction. As for the *speculative* points in difference between those that are called *Jansenists* and the *Jesuits*, I never concerned my self about them; only I observed the *Jansenists* to be *Men heartily* disposed to *reform* peoples *lives* to the *antient discipline* of the *Church*, and who thought nothing too much to work a *real Conversion* of the *soul* to *God* in a virtuous good life; whereas I ever conceived the *Jesuits* to be the most subtle, slie, undermining Generation that ever I saw. I don't know what's the matter, but whenever I saw a *Jesuite*, me-thought I perceived another sort of Man-kind different from the rest; they had a more *Intriguing Countenance* than others; whether it were their *Habit* that conduced to work in me this opinion, or what it was, I can't imagine; but so it was, that I often expresst my self to that purpose, even among *R. Catholicks.*

In those years I spent at *Paris*, I must confess I had no *scruples* in *Religion*, but went on and did as my Neighbors did, in those matters, wholly bending my mind to *Improvement* in *Physick*, with all the industry and application I was capable.

The *Roman Religion* has the greatest *Charm*, of any thing in Nature; 'twill soon cause a more than *Stoical insensibility* upon the *Conscience*; and though it were never so squeamish, troublesome, or scrupulous before, 'twill now turn proof against all future doubts, and never suspect it self in the least, let things be in themselves never so *Ridiculous* or *Unreasonable*. This I have nearly observed, both

in

in my ſelf and others, and there's very good reaſon for it: For when men have wholly ſhut the *eyes* of their *underſtanding*, and leave themſelves to be conducted by others they repoſe an *abſolute Confidence* in, they go on boldly and blindly, and conſider no further whether they are in the right or wrong way to *Heaven*. And again, if we conſider the propenſity of *Mans Nature* to impoſe upon others, when they have an *abſolute indiſputable Power*, we may fairly preſume that theſe *Uncontroulable Guides* will be apt to lead where their own *Intereſt* draws them. And indeed the *Roman Church* has always had ſo conſtant diligent an *Eye* upon their own *beloved ſecular Intereſt*, that they have made the whole *Chriſtian Religion*, in every *particular* almoſt, as ſubſervient as the Wit of Man can invent, to this *great End*, their *Diana* above all others. Now we ſhould certainly ſuſpect the judgment and advice of any private Perſon in the management of an affair, if we perceived this temper to prevail; and why may we not with the ſame reaſon ſuſpect it in ſo *great*, though publick a concern? May not a *knot* of *People* of the ſame *Gang*, the ſame *Intereſt* and *Meaſures*, met in a *General Council*, have the ſame Conſideration for their own *advantage*, as we always obſerve in leſſer *Communities* or *Societies*? If every Member of theſe larger *Aſſemblies* were of this or that *Opinion* before they met, that is to ſay, of ſuch as *dear Intereſt* guided them, we can expect no more from their conferring *Notes* together, but a *Confirmation* of what they held, were reſolved to hold before.

Now *de facto* that the *Church of Rome* has notoriouſly ſteered their determinations in *Councils* according to this *Principle*, may be ſeen with half an eye by any Intelligent perſon, who ſhall either weigh the *Controverſies* in debate between them and *Proteſtants*, or conſider the *Hiſtory* and Paſſages of former times. *Man's Infallibility* was very ingeniouſly contrived to ſuperſede all ſuch diſquiſitions, but God be thanked, no Barbarous *Inquiſition* does here hinder us from a free exerciſe of our *Reaſon*, nor ſtupid voluntary blindneſs diſenable us from diſcerning *Light* from *Darkneſs*.

If it may be good *Logick* to make an *Induction* of a *general Temper* from that of *Particulars*; our *Engliſh Prieſts* will ſerve to give us a very good inſtance of their *worldly Inclinations*. I have heard one of themſelves (one of the *beſt Prieſts*, and *beſt Men*, I had the fortune to meet among them, and no leſs than Dr. of *Divinity*) ſeriouſly tell me he had frequently obſerv'd, that he never in all his life knew a *Religious Man*, who was once become a *Miſſioner* hither, and had here exchang'd his *Religious* into a *Secular Life*; but he fell ſo much in love with it, that he thought it *Death* and Miſery to return again to his *Monaſtery*. 'Twas my fortune to Dine with one good *Father Jeſuite*, the day before he was bound for St. *Omers*, by *Command* of his *Superiors*; and poor Man, it pitied me to ſee him look ſo ghaſtly, as if he wanted a *Phyſician* both for Soul and Body; the *World*, the *Fleſh*, &c. it ſeems, had got too great a dominion over his *Spiritual Intentions* that he had, when he made his *Raſh Vows*.

I have known ſome of them as Critical in their *Crevat-ſtring* and *Periwigg*, and examine themſelves by the *Glaſs* with as much care, as a *Fop* that's lately arriv'd from *France*, who's grown ſo vain by his *Travels*, as to think all the *Ladies* in love with him. Particularly one Man I can't but take notice of; he is no leſs than an *Engliſh Dr. of* the Sorbon; he was a very hopeful ingenious Man while he liv'd in his *Monaſtery* at *Paris*, but being lately ſent to breath freſh *ſecular air*, I met him ſeveral times in the Streets, and other places, and he was ſo great an *Admirer* of his *Sword* and *Periwigg*, and turn'd ſo true a Sr. *Fopling*, that I could hardly know him again; a ſtranger *Metamorphoſis* is ſeldom found in *Ovid*. Now when ſuch people as theſe (ſo *Spiritually* diſpoſed!) are ſummon'd to meet in a *general Council*, there's mighty hopes of an *Accommodation* and Chriſtian management in *Doctrins* which relate to *temporal intereſt*.

And now I am ſpeaking concerning 'em, I ſhall venture to give you my opinion as to their *Learning* and *Capacity*: I did expect indeed to have met with Men as *Univerſally Learned* as they would fancy themſelves *Catholick*; but really they ſeem to me to be generally a very *illiterate* and *weak* people. *Illiterate*, I mean, as to any *true ſolid Learning*, the knowledge of *Hiſtory*, *Mathematicks*, or *Nature*. So *ignorant* they are in thoſe ſubſtantical knowledges, that I ſeldom met with any one of 'em who ſo much as pretended to things of that nature. But we muſt except the *Jeſuits*, whoſe *general Learning*, and moſt *politick Arts* have renderd them more conſide-

rable to the *See* of *Rome*, and formidable to *Princes* and *great Families*, than all other *Orders* put together. They know how to be *useful* in other things besides *hearing Confessions*; nor do they value themselves mainly for skill in chopping of *Logick*, as other little *Priests* will do. But one thing I can never forgive any of them, and that is their *fond Opinion* of their own way of *Education*, in so much that they cannot be perswaded that a *truly learned Man* can come out of our *Universities*, though at this day there's not a Man among 'em but one, that has writ *sense* in *defence* of their *Religion*, besides such as they have had from us. The *Author* of the *Guide in Cantroversies* is no doubt an *Oxonian*, and so was *good* Mr. *Cressy*, whom though dead, I shall ever honour; Dr. *Godden* and Mr. *Serjeant* were of *Cambridge*: And who else have they now to brag of, besides *Canes* the *Jesuite*, who is able to talk and write *Coherently* and *Sophistically* of any side.

But 'tis time to take my leave of them, and go on with my first intention. The first Book that Alarum'd me out of the Lethargy I liv'd in, was put forth by Dr. *Stillingfleet*, called *The Jesuites Loialty*, which pull'd off the Vizard they generally wore. The *R. Catholick* Gentlemen did always profess as much as I could hear, *good Principles* of *Loyalty*, and would often venture to maintain full as much as is contained in the *Oath of Allegiance*. And this made several *Heads* of the *Jesuitical Society* fall to work with their *Pen*, to hinder the effects, as much as they were able, of such prevailing *Princi-*

ples

ples. For you may be assur'd the *good Fathers*, who writ those discourses, as well as the rest of their Tribe, make little or no distinction between those that are called *Hereticks*, and those that are not *truly Jesuitical*: They think, or would perswade us, that the *Temporal Interest* of *Rome*, and their *Party* is of as much concern to mens *Salvation*, as the *Doctrinal* part of *Christianity*. For my part, my nature ever abhor'd the dismal Consequences that must ensue from the *Pope*, or *Church-mens* invasion of *Temporal Power*. *Give unto* Cæsar *the things that are* Cæsars, *and unto God the things that are Gods*, is very good *Scripture*, and plain sense, let the *Jesuits* comment as they please. The *Priest* does well in the *Church*, and executes an Office that deserves *Reverence* from all who pretend to *honour God*; but in the *politick Capacity*, or at the *temporal Tribunal*, *Gods grace* is apt to leave him, and he becomes the most *unmerciful Man* that can be approached. This is too too evident in the Conduct of the *Bishop* of *Rome*, his *Legates*, or other *Court Officers*, who have certainly done the *Life* of *Christianity* more harm by their *Tyranny*, than can be made amends by all the *benefits* of *Unity*, or other pretended consideration why they ought to execute such Power.

Is it possible to imagine that *Christianity*, which was taught with such plainess and *simplicity* at first, by plain, harmless, illiterate, innocent Men, should now necessarily want all the *art* & *intrigue*, all the *cunning devices* and *politick impostures* that the most *subtle Learning* and working brains of Men is able to invent! Was *Learning* and *Policy* in the *Apostles*

time

time ſo inſignificant and uſeleſs to the *propagation* of *Religion*, and muſt they now be the only prop for its *Continuance*? Certainly we may ſuſpect the *Primitive ſpirit* of *Religion* to be much changed, when ſuch contrary *methods* are now *practiſed*. And this reflection has made me much undervalue all the pains of the *School-men*, and ſometimes think that *Seneca* and *Cicero* will be found to deſerve better in the other world than they, when the *works* of all Men ſhall come to be tried. *Virtue* and *good Life* will have a different luſtre from that of *Amuſements* and *Speculations*, and the *practical Commandments* of *God* will far out-dazle all the falſe lights of little *Queſtions* and *Diſputations*. Much *Knowledge* will then ſerve only to enhance the guilt of our *neglects* to *God*, and we ſhall wiſh much rather to have been *Doers* than *Inquirers* of his *will*. Alas what *general Defections* from *Virtue* muſt the world expect, and how great ones muſt it needs feel, when the greateſt part of *Church men*, who *teach* us *Chriſt*, are much more concerned to advance their own *Grandeur* and *Luxury*, than the *real good* of *ſouls*, when they altogether ſtudy this world inſtead of the other.

But here I would not be underſtood to condemn *humane Learning*; if we will but joyn the ſeeming *fooliſhneſs*, the *ſimplicity* of the *Goſpel* to our *Book-acquiſitions*, we ſhall do no harm to either: *Learning* will then ſerve to convince us the better of our own *Ignorance* in moſt things, and not puff us up with empty ſwelling conceits, and we ſhall not deſpiſe our Fellow-creatures, becauſe better acquainted with *Notions* and *Languages*.

This

This *Digreſſion* I hope may be excuſable, if rightly underſtood even by *Scholars* as well as others, and I ſhall now return to my former ſubject, the exorbitant power that *Popes* have gotten into their hands by their ſubtle Policies, and the aſſiſtence of fawning Paraſites; whether it is conſiſtant with our *Bleſſed Saviours Declaration, that his Kingdom is not of this World*, may eaſily be judged. But I have often admired how *Emperors* and *Monarchs* came firſt to part with their Birth-right, and bow their *Scepters* down before an *Ambitious Prelate*. I conceive they might have been wrought upon, ſome through *Zeal* and *Weakneſs*, and others through *Fear* and *Terror*. The *Pope* had every where his *cunning ſpies* in the *Courts* of *Princes*, his *Wolves* in *Sheeps Cloathing*, to acquaint him with his beſt advantages, and direct him where he might make the moſt proſperous *Invaſions*, and eaſieſt *Acceſſes* to *Princely Power*.

The *Doctrine* of *Depoſing Kings*, and *Abſolving Subjects from their Allegiance*, for *Hereſie*, or any thing elſe, it matters not much; for they will call *Hereſie* what they pleaſe, as they do call *Hereticks* whom they pleaſe; this *Doctrine* I ſay, is equally *ſenſeleſs* as *prodigious*. 'Twill appear ſufficiently *Senſeleſs* and *Irrational*, if Men will but conſider that they are *Chriſtians* as well as *Papiſts*, and are obliged to follow *Chriſt* as well as the *Pope*. Our *Saviour* gave us the moſt perfect example that *Chriſtians* can pretend to imitate. How did he earneſtly avoid all *Temporal Power*, that his Diſciples would even then by their good will have been nib-

ling

ling at? What pains did he take to *Spiritualize* their *Conceptions*? The *Jews* did expect indeed the *Meſſias's Kingdom to be of this World*, and that he would govern in *pomp* and *greatneſs*; but how we ſhould come to think ſo of him or his followers, I can't poſſibly underſtand; we who own to believe that he was born in a *Stable*, a *poor Carpenters Son*, that had ſeldom ſtock enough by him to provide for the morrow. When *God* was pleaſed to *humble* himſelf in this manner, and after ſuffering all the Indignities this world was able to beſtow, did chooſe to conclude his moſt *Innocent Life* with the *Ignominious Death* upon the *Croſs*; can we think he deſigned that any under pretence of being his *Vicar*, ſhould preſently hoiſe above all that is called *God*, and enlarge their *Scepter* from *Rome* to the uttermoſt parts of the *world*?

How *Prodigious* this *Doctrine* muſt have been too in its effects? How it hath made Chriſtian Princes and the World to tremble, our *Nation* is now grown ſufficiently ſenſible from the frequent *Tragedies* that have been *acted*, or *deſigned* to be *acted* upon our own *Theater* without enumerating the many Forreign inſtances which might be produced.

That the *Pope* and *Church of Rome* have proudly arrogated ſuch *intolerable Power* over all *Princes* that come within their reach, all ſuch as deſire, or are capable of being ſatisfied concerning it, may have recourſe to a *Letter* writ lately on the *diſcovery of this Plot*, wherein this ſubject is moſt ſolidly and fully, as well as briefly handled by a moſt *excellent Pen*;

Pen; they may also consider those three *Treatises* formerly mentioned, called *The Jesuites Loyalty*. And yet notwithstanding that this charge is as evident as the Sun, 'tis pleasant, shall I say, or wonderful to consider, that many good well-meaning *Popish* Women, as well as deaf and blind Gentlemen, will not yet be perswaded that the *Church* is *guilty* of any such *Doctrine*; no, seeing it, they will not see, and knowing it, they will not understand. The *Infallible Guide* must not, cannot be *suspected* of doing any harm; and the *Director* of the *Conscience* shall presently settle any such *scruple* with a little of his *Art*, either by flatly denying it, or softning it, or turning the charge into Ridicule.

And from this Consideration I shall take occasion to urge one most *invincible Argument*, or *Demonstration* rather, against the *Pretended Infallibility* of the *Romish Church*. 'Tis this:

That *Church* which *teaches Doctrines* that destroy *Morality*, may be fairly *suspected*, (nay, *necessarily concluded*) to *teach Errors* in *matters of Faith*.

But the *Church of Rome* has *taught Doctrines* that destroy *Morality*.

Therefore it may be *concluded* to *teach Errors* in *matters of Faith*.

The *Major* has as much evidence as *Reason* can possibly desire. For supposing any Man, or Men, *guilty* of *notorious Vices*, and *exhorting* us to the same *Vices*, can the *reason* of a *Christian* think such a Man, or Men *infallible* in their *Councils* in a small affair, so as to repose absolute Confidence in him, or

them, much leſs in the greateſt concern of this life, the eternal concern of *Heaven*? eſpecially if we conſider that *Chriſtian Religion* all along the *Goſpel*, and the reſt of the *holy Scriptures*, does *advance Morality*, and put the greateſt eſteem upon it, of any *Religion* in the World. Beſides the *Doctrines* of *Self-denial* therein urged further than any *Philoſophers* ever thought fit; it teaches us to *love our Neighbours as our ſelves*, *to live Peaceably with all men*, *to forgive and do good to our very Enemies*, and recommends *Love* and *Charity* ſo often, and ſo earneſtly, as if the reſt of *Religion*, *Faith in Chriſt*, &c. were things that needed not being exhorted to, they would ſo neceſſarily follow by the ſecret workings of *Gods grace*, where ſo *Loving* and *Good* a *Diſpoſition* takes place in the *heart*.

Now the *Minor Propoſition*, that the *Church* of *Rome* has taught *Doctrines* which deſtroy *Morality*, will eaſily enough appear, if the arrogant allowance of a *Proud Prelate* to diſpoſe of *Kingdoms* that don't belong to him, to *Proſecute* with *Fire* and *Sword* all ſuch poor innocent Souls as refuſe to ſubmit their necks to his heavy yoke, to *Murder* and *Aſſaſſinate* ſuch *Kings* or Perſons as reſiſt his dreadful *Inveſtions*, which he calls *Spiritual*, though diametrically oppoſite to the *ſpirit* of the *Goſpel*, the *ſpirit* of *Meekneſs* and *Charity*, the *ſpirit* of *Long-ſuffering* and *Peace*: In a word, if the *allowance* of *doing Evil that Good may come of it*, doing any thing cruel or barbarous for the promotion of *Religion*, be *Doctrines* that deſtroy *Morality*, as moſt certainly they are; nay, and if thoſe *Councils* which did immediately,

mediately, and that often, ſoon follow the perpetration of ſuch Villanies, were ſo far from deteſting the *facts*, that they rather *confirmed* and *encouraged* the *Pope* in them, at leaſt never mutter'd (good Men!) at what his *Holineſs* had done; then the *Aſſumption* of this *Argument* holds good.

Now as for the *Promiſes* in *Scripture*, which the *Church of Rome* proudly applies to it ſelf for its *Infallibility*, as concerning *God*'s being with his *Church to the end of the world*, &c. I can ſee no reaſon why that *Church* ſhould think it belongs to them more than others. Is it becauſe that *Church* has eſcaped thoſe Devaſtations and Judgments which the others have ſo ſeverly felt? They have the greater reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves for that; for *God's People*, the *Iſraelites*, did always fall from the *true Worſhip* of the *Lord*, and bow'd down to the *falſe Gods* of the *Gentiles*, when they flouriſhed moſt in *Proſperity*, and *God* was pleaſed to think that nothing would reclaim 'em but fearful *Judgments*, ſuch as *Plagues*, *War*, *Famine*, and ſometimes *Captivities* for many years: And ſtill upon their return to him, he deliver'd them out of all their Afflictions. But there are ſufficient natural reaſons why *Italy* has leſs felt the Sword and Power of Foreign Enemies than the other *Churches*. Its Situation defends them from Enemies abroad; they have the *Ocean* on one ſide, the *Alps* on another, and *Friends* to ſuſtain the brunt on all parts, by Land: And beſides, the ſame reaſon will plead better for *Mahomets Succeſſors*, as every Age growing more and more *Victorious*, whereas the *Empire* of the *Prelate of Rome* has conſiderablydecreaſed.

Again, That *Promiſe* before-mentioned was not made to St. *Peter* alone, but to *all* the *Apoſtles*, ſo that the other *Biſhops* of *Apoſtolical Sees* ſhould have deriv'd the ſame *Infallible ſpirit* to their *Succeſſors*, as the *Biſhop of Rome* inſolently claims to him and his *Church*.

But that other *Promiſe*, *Thou art* Peter, *and upon this Rock I will build my Church*, makes the *Romaniſts* ſcorn the reſt of the World, and look upon themſelves as the only *Choſen of God*. St. *Peter* certainly was a *great Apoſtle*, Converted many Countries, and had the honour to be named firſt in the *Catalogue* of the *Apoſtles*, and ſo had *Priority of Order*, though in another place he is not numbred for the firſt, *Gal.* 2. 9. But ſurely if this *great Apoſtle* had had a *Superior juriſdiction* over the reſt, St. *Paul* would have been more *modeſt* than to have ſo ſeverely *Rebuked him to his Face*, as he did, *Gal.* 2. 11. for a ſhrewd miſcarriage in his charge, making the *Chriſtian Gentiles* to *Judaize*. And St. *Paul* was ſo far from encroaching on the *Power* of St. *Peter*, that he thought himſelf *unworthy* of the great *Name* of an *Apoſtle*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 9. was ſo *Good*, that he could have been contented to have been an *Anathema*, or Accurſed for ever, for the ſake and happineſs of his Brethren the *Jews*, Rom. 9. 3. Beſides, St. *Peter* was more likely to have choſen *Antioch* for the *Seat* of his *Succeſſors*, as being the place where he liv'd moſt part of his Life, and exerciſed his *Epiſcopal* Charge with honour, benefit, and ſafety, rather than *Rome*, where it is certain he could be but a little while, and many with good

reaſon

reaſon doubt whether ever he was there or no; where likewiſe he was ſo far from being welcome, that it is ſaid he was there very unkindly received, and after much oppoſition, *Crucified* moſt cruelly.

He that will needs have a *Church* to be *Infallible*, I would deſire him to conſider the condition of the *Iſraelites*, the *Choſen People* of *God*, who were brought out of *Ægypt* with ſuch a mighty Hand, ſo great an attendance of *Miracles* and *Favours*. One would think certainly, if it were in the Nature of Man not to go aſtray, if any were capable of *worſhipping* the *True God* as they ſhould do, theſe ſhould have been the Men above all others. And yet, though they had a *Cloud* by day, and a *Pillar of Fire* by night to guide them all along; though the *Glory of God* did often fill the *Tabernacle* in the ſight of them all; nay, though they were fed with *Miracles*, *Manna* and *Quails*, and *Fountains* ran out of dry *Rocks*, yet theſe ſame People would be continually falling from their *Duty*, they would be longing after *Ægypt*, nay and *making Gods to go before them*; they were not only guilty of the higheſt *Immoralities*, and *Murmurings* at their *good God* upon every trivial account, but were contented abſolutely to forſake him, and fall into *groſs Idolatry*. If after all this, ſo ſad a manifeſtation of the proneneſs of poor Man-kind to *Sin* and *Error*, *Infallibility* can ſtill glibly go down to a conſidering Man, I ſhall more wonder at him, than have any thing to ſay to him.

Nay, if Men can be ſuppoſed to have ſo clear and undoubted underſtanding in *Spiritual Truths*, how

how comes it to pass that all *Natural* things lie so hid and intricate to the conceptions of the wisest Men. A little *Knowledge* indeed will puff up, and be apt to perswade People that they know a great deal, but a significant Progress will have a contrary effect, and make them *humbly acknowledge* they *know very little*, if any thing at all. The *nature* of *light* and *colours*, the plainest things of any, remain so *obscure* and *unintelligible*, that they still occasion new *Hypotheses*, and perhaps will do so to the end of the World.

To speak one word with *Submission* to my own *Faculty*; What *certain infallible Methods* has *Physick* yet attain'd to? 'tis much to be doubted whether *Beasts* by the *Instinct* of *Nature* (so much undervalued by our *Opiniative Reason*) do not *Cure* themselves of most *distempers* much *sooner* and *safer* than fanciful Men can yet do with all their *Art* and so much glorifi'd *Reason*. Besides the *Cure of Agues*, brought now to a kind of *absolute certainty* by some *rightly Educated real Physicians*, to my *certain knowledge*, as well, if not better than by the much *Celebrated*, though *Illegitimate Son* of this *Art*, what truly *specifical Cures* can *Physicians* yet boast of? The *cause* of this slow advancement, I take to be, that Men will impute the *failures* of their *Remedies* and *Methods*, rather to *Nature* than their own *Conduct*. Let never so many men dye unhappily of such or such a distemper, *long-practising Physicians* will never suspect themselves, but think all was done by them as well as it might have been done, whereas, if they took their *Indications* from what does

does *ſenſible good* or *ill*, and from *judicious obſervations* did all their might to correct the *failures* of their *Practice*, and would but once impute theſe *failures* to their own *ignorance*, and want of *ſufficient skill*, there ſeems to me to be hopes *God* would then *bleſs* their endeavours for the *Body*, as he does *humble Divines* on behalf of the *Soul*. The *gift of Healing* was once the *gift of God*, as all good things moſt certainly are ſtill; and if Men would ſometimes look up to the *Fountain* of all *Goodneſs*, as as well as into *Books*, we might then expect to find *Learned Ingenious Phyſicians* do as much, if not more than mean *ignorant* People, and *weak Women* are often found to do.

But there are, God be thanked, ſome *Phyſicians* among us, who have pleaſed to be of this *Chriſtian Opinion*, and do work no few *real Cures* in the moſt *dangerous Diſtempers* by *mild* and *innocent* ways, ſuch as will at laſt be acknowledged moſt *agreeable* to *Nature*, when *truth* and *moderation* ſhall have gain'd the *Victory* over *Envy* and *Paſſion*.

One word more, and I paſs from this ſubject. The *Fathers* of the 4th. *General Council* had no ſuch deference then for the *Biſhop of Rome*, as he now claims for his inherent right. They did give the *Biſhop of Rome*, Can. 28. *Æqualia Privilegia*, equal, or the very ſame privileges as they did to the *Biſhop* of *Conſtantinople*. Their reaſon they ſaid was, *Quod ibi illa imperaret*, becauſe that was the *Imperial Seat*, the *Empire* was then divided, and *Old Rome* was the *Seat* of the *Weſtern Empire*, as *New Rome*, or *Conſtantinople* was the *Imperial Seat* of the *Eaſt*. It

was

was not for any derivation from St. *Peter*, but in honour of the *Emperour*, that they were pleaſed to allow him *equal privileges*. And this they did not lightly, irregularly, or Uncanonically, but *jure*, they ſaid they did it *juſtly*, what they ought to do, and no more. Then again, the *Legates* of the *Roman Biſhop* had no Authority allowed them to ſpeak any thing in the *Council*, no more than the reſt, without leave firſt granted them from the *Emperors Officers*, who ſate there in his *place* and ſtead. The *Legates* of *Pope Leo* ſpake to him thus, *Si Imperat Magnificentia veſtra, habemus quædam referre vobis. Glorioſiſſimi judices dixerunt, Quod vultis edicite. If your Highneſs will give us leave, commands us to ſpeak, we have ſomthing to ſay to you. The moſt noble Judges, anſwered, Speak what you pleaſe.* Now whether the World is not ſtrangely changed ſince thoſe *Primitive* days, whether the *Popes Supremacy* over *Emperors*, *Kings*, and that very *Biſhop of Conſtantinople* be right and juſt, and whether his calling all *Schiſmaticks*, & not *Hereticks*, that will not own his Univerſal-ſpreading *Supremacy*, ought to frighten and ſcare people, I leave you and all Men calmly to judge.

And now to return again to the more immediate deſign of this *Letter*, which is not intended to be an angry Child of *Controverſie*, but mildly and truly to give an *Hiſtorical* account of my ſelf, and ſome of my own thoughts, which ſhook and chill'd my *Roman Zeal* a good conſiderable time before the late Helliſh devices made every innocent ſoul to tremble.

The

The first was a strange and preposterous *influence* that *Religion* has on all its *Proselytes*, wholly to *neglect*, if not *slight* the *holy Scriptures*. Let a Man have used himself never so much to the reading that *Holy Book*, and let him have received never so much sensible edification from it, yet as soon as ever he embraces that *Religion*, he presently throws the *Book* out of his hands, easily parts with it as a thing altogether useless to any body that will but receive it, and entirely delivers himself up to the *conduct* of *humane Traditions*. No future *Curiosity* shall draw him to *read* in it, nor *Arguments* taken from it, make the least significant impression. Now 'tis a most wonderful consideration to me, how those who profess the *Doctrine* of the *Gospel*, and think the *Scriptures* Pen'd by the *Spirit of God*, should presently lose all deference to *Gods Word*, and mind it as little as some idle tale.

The *Fathers* of the *Church* were of a very different temper. St. *Chrysostom* Homil. 9. in *Epist. ad Coloss.* speaks thus, *Audite omnes sæculares, comparate vobis Biblia, si nihil aliud vultis, vel Novum Testamentum acquirite, Apostolorum Acta, Evangelia*, &c. Hearken to me all you of the *Laity*, provide your selves *Bibles* every one of you, and if you can't reach to procure the *whole Bible*, get the *New Testament* at least, the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, the *Evangelists*, &c. for we must remember that such *large Manuscripts* as were the *whole Bible*, were too dear to be purchased by every body, before *Printing* was found out. There are abundance of Exhortations in St. *Chrysostom* to the same purpose, which *Bellarmine*, as

great a wit as he was, gives but a very poor Childiſh anſwer to.

Another thing made me ſeriouſly reflect, and that was the *fruitleſs Devotions* that are generally *practiſed* in that *Church*. Men ſhall inſtead of *Praying*, ſpend their time in toſſing a ſtring of *Beads*, and mumbling they conſider not what, a *Devotion* fitter for *Children* to *ſport* with, than *Men* to *Pray* with. 'Twas a moſt excellent contrivance to make People think they were ſaying their *Prayers*, when as they were doing nothing; for the *Beads* are of ſuch ſingular uſe, that you may gape and ſtare about as much as you pleaſe, while you ſay 'em; you may talk between whiles, walk about the Streets, think on what you will, and mind what you will, and ſtill go on with your *tale* of *Prayers*: And yet notwithſtanding the *impertinency* of theſe *Knick-knacks*, they are celebrated by the *Church*, as a moſt *extraordinary Devotion*. When the *Roſary* is to be ſaid, that is, theſe *Beads* told over in the *Church*, you muſt kneel down, or elſe be accounted a *Heretick*: For you muſt underſtand the *Services* of our *Lady*, as this, *our Ladies Litany*, and the *Salve Regina*, require much more Reverence, and more neceſſary Obeyſance than any *Services* of our *Lord God*. At *Prayers* to our *Lord*, you may either ſit, ſtand, or be as careleſs as you pleaſe, but at *Prayers* to our *Lady*, you muſt learn better manners, and fall on your Knees, though 'tis never ſo painful to you to kneel. *Bleſſed Soul!* ſhe does not require theſe things at our hands; ſhe was *humble* and *meek* when ſhe was upon Earth, and is not

not to be doubted of the ſame *temper* now in *Heaven*. God was then her *Saviour* as well as ours, but now ſhe muſt be *Immaculate* and *free* from *Original ſin*, and be ſuppoſed to have had no need at all of the *Saviour her good ſpirit did then rejoyce in*. But 'tis natural to Men to flatter *Ladies*, and ſome muſt be excuſed if they do *Romance* on their account. Hence it was ſhe came to be *Queen of Heaven*, *Queen of Angels* and *all Saints*, *the hope* and *refuge of Sinners*, &c. and is repreſented with *Crowns* and *Glory*, whereas her *Son* muſt never be ſuffered to grow bigger than a *Baby* in her arms, to ſhew his filial ſubjection to her, though the *Scripture* mentions not any thing that our *Saviour* ſaid to her, or of her in his whole life-time, without ſomething as it were on purpoſe to reſtrain Men from that *Superſtition* which does now ſo prevail in the *Roman Church*.

Again, to enervate quite the very *deſign* of *true Devotion*, they have found another way to amuſe people with, by inſtructing them to ſay their *Prayers in Latin*, which they don't underſtand. *Women* forſooth ſhall venture to ſay *our Ladys Office* in *Latin*, one would think it were on purpoſe that their *Prayers* might not be a whit *beneficial* to their *Souls*, but they ſay 'tis in *Reverence* to the *Church*, which does all in *Latin*, which *Baptizes*, nay *Marries* in *Latin*, and plights thoſe Sacred Tyes between ignorant people with a *Volo*, promiſing they know not what or how. And is it not a wiſe buſineſs, that becauſe the *Prieſt* ſings his Part in *Latin*, every ignorant Sot muſt needs be chirping the ſame tune,

in the ſame (unknown) language? This puts me in mind of a *ſtory* in my own knowledge: A certain Gentlewoman goes to *Confeſſion* to *Somerſet-Houſe*, there eaſes her mind in a great many matters to the *Fryer* that underſtood *Engliſh Confeſſions*; when ſhe had done her ſtory, the good *Father* ſets her for her *Pennance* to ſay our *Ladies Office* in *Latin* every day for a year together; a very ſevere task indeed, 'twould have been even for a *Nun* that had little elſe to do. A *Prieſt* of my acquaintance, from whoſe own mouth I had this Relation, gives this Lady a Viſit the next day by chance, and finds her full of tears and trouble: He enquires into the *Cauſe* (for they love dearly to know the *Secrets* of *Families*, and to be a medling where they can) and after a few reluctancies were conquer'd, ſhe diſcover'd to him her grief, that ſhe had ſuch a *Pennance* ſet her as 'twas impoſſible for her to perform, for ſhe was not *Learned* enough to underſtand a word of *Latin*. He preſently Counſelled her to make the ſame *Confeſſion* to him, and ſhe ſhould have no ſuch reaſon to be troubled (for if a Perſon diſlike his *Pennance*, he may lawfully have a new one ſet him, if he will make the ſame *Confeſſion* again to another *Prieſt*). She (good Lady) was very loth to do that, for it ſeems 'twas no ſmall matter ſhe had *confeſt*, and was therefore unwilling to uncover her ſores again. Upon that, he takes his leave, and ſhe blubber'd it out that night; but the next morning upon ſecond thoughts grew wiſer, and came to him with tears and courage together: She then fell upon her Knees, and out

came

came the grievous things she had committed, and this *Indulgent Priest* was so favourable as to order her only to say the *Penitential Psalms* once over in *English*, and the Lady became as merry as a Cricket again.

Hence you see what a mighty stress lies upon *Prayers* in *Latin*, in the opinion of those *senseless Men*, who never saw any thing of the World out of a *Monastery*, and what wise *States-men* they're like to prove, when they meddle with publick affairs. This other was a *secular Priest*, a Man of a good capacity and judgment, and I have seldom met with a more understanding Man of his Coat.

A few years agoe there was Printed an excellent *Book* of *Devotion*, called *Devotion by way of Offices*; a *Book* so full of the *Divine Spirit*, *solid sense*, and *good English*, that I can hardly remember to have seen the like, unless it be the Εικων Βασιλικη of our late *Incomparable Sovereign*. 'Twas a work so free from exception, that paring away the *Ave Mary*, a *Hymn* to our *Lady* at the conclusion of the *Office*, and very little or nothing more, it might serve as well for the use of *Protestants* as *Papists*. 'Twas writ by a *Lay-Gentleman*, a man of a most exemplary life, and so ingenious, that all who knew him, or heard of him, or had any inward respect for true Learning or Virtue, coveted his acquaintance so far, that they made his House the Center of all their meetings. And yet the *Jesuits* will not bestow one kind word on this Man, or Book. The Gentleman they condemn for a *Blackloist*, that is as they

will

will have it, a worſe *Heretick* than a *Proteſtant*, though he declar'd himſelf with never ſo much ſubmiſſion to the *Catholick-Church*. The *Book* they diſſwade all People from uſing, for no manner of reaſon, but becauſe it is not ſtufft with thoſe *Litanies*, and *Prayers to Saints* the *Manual* abounds with, or that it will do their ſouls too much real good, or becauſe it was written by a *Lay-man* no ways *Jeſuited*.

There's one thing more I can't but obſerve. And that is, that all the *Convents of Nuns*, let them be never ſo *Ignorant*, muſt be forc'd to ſay and ſing the *Office of the Church* in *Latin*, for *Morning* and *Evening Prayers*, and the other *Canonical hours*. So it ſeems they ſeparate themſelves from the World to a good purpoſe, and muſt needs make ſtrange advancements in *Devotion* to *God*, when they thus ſpend their time at *Church*, and in numbring long Catalogues of *Ave Maries*. 'Tis much, if they don't repent their firſt *Zeal*, when they have liv'd long enough there to grow ſober, and conſider.

True Devotion conſiſts in thoſe means that raiſe the *heart* to the *love of God* above all things, and which conduce to make us live *Honeſtly* and *Charitably* with all Men, and not in a *toothleſs Lip-ſervice*, where the *heart* is not, cannot be concern'd.

A third thing that muſt touch ſenſibly upon the *Conſcience* of any one that was ever a *Proteſtant*, is the *Prayers to Saints*, and eſpecially thoſe continual Supplications that are made in the higheſt manner to the *Ever-bleſſed Virgin*. He may indeed comply a little, following the *general rule* of *Believing* as the *Church*

Church Believes, and *practising* as the *Church practises*, but he can never force out of his mind his *dependence* on *God Almighty*, and *heartily* quit his *natural refuge* to *God* to make Applications to this or that *Saint*.

The *Worship of Images*, so flat against the 2d. *Commandment*, and the putting out the 2d. *Commandment* so plain against the *Worship of Images*; the *Adoration of Reliques*, *Agnus Dei's*, and other *Consecrated Bawbles* will make the *Conscience* of a *Protestant* grumble sometimes, let him do what he will, and declare himself never so much for that *Church*. Concerning *Reliques* I observed, that when they were exposed on great days to the view of all comers, there was a *Priest* to gard 'em, who would take it very unkindly, if any body presumed to *kiss* the *Case* they were kept in, without *depositing* some *Mite* into the *Dish* just by. So that poor People must only look on, and devoutly admire the Reliques and the *rich Case* together, without profaning it with an empty, too near an approach. And again, some *Images* and *Altars* have a much greater virtue in 'em than others. His *Holiness* has bestowed most *liberal Indulgences* to some above others, that is, he has favoured more particularly such or such a *Monastery*, and granted them a means to make *Fools* flock thither more abundantly, and confer their *Charity* with a freer hand to the disposal of a pack of Covetous Insatiable Wretches.

Now 'tis most certain and plain that the *worship of God* without an *Image* is *lawful* beyond dispute; with an *Image* 'tis *dangerous* at least, to say no worse.

To

To *Pray* to the *God* that made us, is *safe* beyond ſcruple: *Prayers* to *Saints* may make God *Jealous* of his Honour. To ſay ſuch *Prayers* as *affect* the *heart*, cannot but be very *acceptable* to him; but a dry inſipid *Lip-ſervice* ought much to be *ſuſpected*. To *Receive* the *Bleſſed-Sacrament* as our *Saviour* did himſelf *Inſtitute* it, cannot but be *effectual* to a ſoul duly prepared: But the mincing this great *Sacrament*, the taking it by halfs is not what he intended, if we will follow his own example, or believe his own words. In a word, to *believe* the *three Creeds*, the *foundation of Chriſtianity*, and imitate the *Primitive* the beſt & pureſt times, is very *rational* for a *good Chriſtian*; but to take in all the idle *Superſtructures* that *Politick*, or *Zealous*, or *Ignorant* Men have ſince raiſed, either for ſelf-ends, or through weakneſs, or the wilfulneſs of Opiniators, gives too great a Latitude to the Enemy of Man-kind, who watches all opportunities to withdraw us from our duty.

'Tis not the Title and Name of *Catholick*, which *Roman Catholicks* do ſo uncharitably appropriate to themſelves, that ſhould frighten us into a better opinion of them than they deſerve. I know not why an *Engliſh Catholick* ſhould not ſound full as well as a *Roman Catholick*; but in their ſenſe 'tis a meer *Soleciſm*, as much as a *Particular-general*. 'Tis not the *Name*, but the *Thing* that muſt do our buſineſs hereafter. And a moſt uncharitable excluſion of all Man-kind from *Salvation*, beſides thoſe that are Croſs'd with that Title on their Fore-heads, will help but little to forward our future happineſs, let Zealous fiery *Prieſts* urge it till their hearts ake.

But

But that no body may be ſcar'd from doing their *duty* in *England*, upon the conſideration that no *Salvation* can be had out of the *Roman Catholick Church*, I ſhall here declare, that I have often talkt with ſome of the moſt *judicious* and *knowing Prieſts* among them concerning this point, and they have ſeriouſly agreed with me, that neither they nor the *Church* do think ſo *Uncharitably*. Paltry *Prieſts* will ſay ſo to frighten Women, and weak perſons, but they do not, cannot in their *Conſcience* think ſo, if they have but the leaſt grain of wit.

I could add a great many other things to thoſe already ſaid, though for ſeveral years I have not ſo much as lookt into any *Book* of *Controverſie*, having had ſomthing elſe to do, and being perſuaded that *Controverſie* is the *Mother* of far more *Harm* than *Good*, as turning *Practical Religion* out of doors, and ſpending the *true ſpirit* of *Religion* in *talk* and *noiſe*, which rather conſiſts in *Peace* and *Action*. But I muſt remember I am writing a *Letter*, not a *Treatiſe*; *Do to others as you would be done unto*, is a greater and more ſubſtantial part of *Chriſtianity* than we are commonly aware. And he that would take a few words to guide his life by, let him remember now and then what S. *Paul* teaches him in the 5th. Chapt. to the *Galatians*, where he reckons up what are the *fruits* of the *Fleſh*, and what the *fruits* of the *Spirit*. Theſe latter he ſays are *Love*, *Joy*, *Peace*, *Long-ſuffering*, *Gentleneſs*, *Goodneſs*, *Faith*, *Meekneſs*, *Temperance*, *againſt ſuch there is no Law*. What a chain of kind, ſoft, tender words does he here put together, as if *Good-nature*

were all in all, and our *Religion* required no other *qualification* to make the best sort of *Christian*. And doubtless if this be true, that *Opinion* which renders men *Morose*, *Harsh*, *Unkind*, *Uncharitable*, *Contentious*, or *Cruel*, springs not from the *Spirit* of *God*, but some *evil Spirit*.

But above all things *Charity* is the Lesson that *Christians* are obliged to practise heartily; so necessary 'tis thought in the *Holy Scriptures*, that there are infinite repetitions exhorting us to it; and so useful the *Meditation* of it seems to me, that I shall venture to adjoyn some thoughts on this subject, though it be a little besides my main intention.

Charity is almost the *whole Duty of Man*, and he that performs this duty as he should do, needs little to be remembred of his duty to God. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, is so comprehensive a Precept, and does so fully contain all that can be said, that nothing but the *Spirit of God* could have sum'd up the *Law* in so few words.

Charity does respect both our *Opinions* and our *Actions*. Our *Opinions* or *Censures* ought to be govern'd always by it, or else they'l be found to deviate very widely from what the *Apostles* taught us. *Judge not least you be judged*, sounds very dreadfully and severely, if we consider the narrow Principles and uncharitable Constructions of almost every party of Man-kind. How does every Man now think it *Prudence* to think the worst of one another? How does every little Hot-brain now peevishly confine *Salvation* to his own narrow

Herd,

Herd, though a *number* ſo inconſiderable as hardly fit to be named in the large *Arithmetick* of *Nature*? I ſhould be glad nevertheleſs if they did not wiſh ill to, as well as think ill of one another.

That there is no Salvation to be had out of the pale of Gods true Catholick Church, I believe as firmly as the great *Athanaſius* did; but in what manner this *myſtery* is to be underſtood, I as little perplex my thoughts, as how *Three* can be *One*, how *God* could be *Incarnate* of a *Virgin*, or how we ſhall *Riſe* again with the ſame *numerical Bodies*, that have by long ſucceſſions ſerv'd to *nouriſh* one another, or been *corrupted* into as many *forms* as there are different *ſpecies* of things. I could never conceive how this *Article* of our *Belief* ſhould render us *uncharitable* to all that are not of our own *perſuaſion*. We may as ſoon expect to have a clear *Idea* of the *Joys of Heaven*, the *frame* of *Angels*, or the *Eſſence* of our own *Souls*, as to know what company we ſhall meet with in the other World, or who alone ſhall enter into inconceiveable Bliſs. Let us but take care of our own particular, and by acts of *Charity* and *Devotion* provide ſuitable diſpoſitions for a fit Reception there, and we ſhall be found at laſt to have ſpent our time to much better purpoſe than in ſuch *needleſs*, and perhaps *dangerous diſquiſitions*. Men have all *ſouls* of the ſame immenſe value, and the *Providence* of *God* is over all in general, but what allotments of *Grace* he has made 'em here, or ſhall

hereafter of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, neither the *Apostles* seem to define, nor Apostolical Men since have presumed to determine. I should sin if I ventur'd to speak of this subject, either as largely as *Origen* once did, or as narrowly as some *Divines* do of a latter date; though I am apt to think that *Errors* sprung from too much *Charity* (if I may so say) will be found far more *Innocent* than those from too little.

Truly it makes my heart ake sometimes to consider how easily and willingly people can hurl one another headlong into the *Bottomless pit*. Suppose but twenty Men were here *Condemn'd* to the *Rack*, and appointed to suffer the most exquisite tortures that cruel blood-thirsty Men can tell how to invent, every day for a month together; would not the hearing or seeing such a master-piece of cruelty make every good Man shiver, knowing not how near his own turn might be, if *God* should suffer the furious barbarous disposition of some to take place. How much more inhumane and dreadful then is it, to precipitate one another into that *place of torment*, too intolerable to be expres'd, if it consists in nothing else but confusion of face and heart, the gnawing remorses, and continual stings of a guilty self-confounded Conscience. Me-thinks it should rather trouble us that *any* are like to be so *unhappy*, than to keep out by our good-will all that are not of our own *Opinion*. *Christ* certainly *died* for *all* men, and I *hope* we shall find his *death* applied to the eternal benefit of many

harm-

harmleſs, virtuous, invincibly ignorant People, that common Uncharitableneſs will not let us have a kind thought of here. We may lawfully *think* and *hope* the *beſt* of all Men; for though we are *forbidden* to *ſay* too much for 'em, I'm ſure we are not allow'd to *judge* them too *ſeverely*.

Who could imagine that thoſe who have often read St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 13. ſhould forget the *abſolute neceſſity* of *Charity*, and not be touched with the greateſt concern? 'Tis a *Sermon* that is ſecond to nothing I know extant, unleſs that *Preach'd* upon the *Mount*; and I think it deſerves to be read full as often, as ſome have well conceited that *Pythagoras*'s *Golden Verſes* do deſerve; not to take a leaſure-minute now and then, but be the excellent ſubject of our daily Meditations. The *Charity* there deſcribed, is of ſo *abſolute neceſſity*, that though I had the *knowledge* of *Angels*, and *Wiſdom* of *Solomon*, though I had *Faith* ſtrong enough *to remove Mountains*, *though I gave all my Goods* and Poſſeſſions *to the Poor*, and *my Body to be burned*, upon any other never ſo good account, yet without this, all would ſignifie nothing. That *Charity* is ſuch as *thinks no evil* of any Man, *believeth* and *hopeth* the beſt of *all things*, and peaceably ſubmitteth to all that God pleaſes to inflict. In a word, we are adviſed to abide in *Faith*, *Hope*, *and Charity*, *theſe three*, *but the greateſt* of all is ſaid to be *Charity*.

I ſhall not offer to comment upon this *Divine Chapter*, and compare the *practice* of thoſe that are called *Chriſtians* with the extenſiveneſs of St. *Paul*'s

De-

Description, for fear I should either *prove* or *become* more *uncharitable* than I desire. To uncover such foul sores, without better hopes of healing 'em, would but cause a noisome smell, and but offend those who suffer them as well as my self; and therefore I shall pass to the next branch of this *duty*, and consider it as it concerns our *actions*.

Charity in the distributive sense, as it relates to our *actions* and *practice*, is so inculcated by the *Law* of *Nature*, and common *Genius* of *Man-kind*, that unless one puts off all *Humanity* to receive the *wolf* and *Tygar*, 'twill be extream hard not to have some fellow-feeling of the deplorable wants and miseries of our Fellow-creatures. Those who are *Stewards* of large and ample Fortunes, will have long accounts to make at the *great day*. But Oh what a ravishing sight will it then be to see *the Hungry we have Fed, and the Naked we have Cloathed*! What a multitude of Sins will they stand between and cover! for then 'twill be enquired, not what *Learning* we had gain'd, what Cobwebs we had spun, or what nice speculations we had made; but what *good* we have perform'd, and how we employ'd our *hands* and *hearts*, not our *wits* and *fancy*.

If the *Jewish Law* was but a *Type* of *Christian Discipline*, and our *Saviour* came not to *abrogate* the *Moral-Law*, but to *fulfil* and raise it higher, οὐκ ἀπολύσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι, how much then ought we to exceed the *Jews* in *acts of Charity*? and yet 'tis to be feared we come too short of what their *duty* prompted

pted them to. Beſides their *Annual Tithes* to the *Church*, they gave another *Tithing* to the *Poor* every third year, by Gods own appointment, *Deut.* xxvi. 12, 13. and this comes to the ſame reckoning as an *Annual* 30th. which whether *Chriſtians Charity* doth reach to, or exceed as far as it ſhould, I leave to every Mans *Conſcience* ſeriouſly to conſider. For *except our Righteouſneſs*, Δικαιοσυνη ὑμῶν, the very ſame word that in many places of *Scripture* does neceſſarily ſignifie *Legal Almsgiving*, *except*, I ſay, *our Righteouſneſs does exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we can in no wiſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Now if we conſider but the *Peace* and *Serenity* of *Mind*, the *Heaven* upon *Earth*, that is gained from a conſciouſneſs of having done ſome *real good* to others, it would be a thing eligible, if there were no further *motive*.

But again, If we will but examine our own *Intereſt*, I mean not only our *Eternal Intereſt* which would certainly move us, if we were but effectually perſuaded of it, but alſo our dearly beloved *Temporal Intereſt*, the trueſt way of multiplying our riches, and beſt improvement of our Eſtates, we ſhould readily comply with this *Duty* in all reſpects. What ſays the *Prophet Malachi*, ch. iii. v. 10. *Bring ye all the tithes into the Storehouſe, that there may be meat in mine houſe, and prove me herewith, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing that there ſhall not be room enough to receive it*, and ſee

again.

again Prov. iii. 10. *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.* And the *Scriptures* are full of passages to this purpose, inviting us all manner of ways to try the *goodness of God* which he pleases to offer us in this life, upon one only condition, if we will but believe his *promises* to us. And this puts me in mind of an *excellent story* I have read in a good Author concerning a *Jew*, who when he had *perused* several of those places which *promise* abundance of *Temporal blessings* to *Charitable* persons, resolved to try whether *God* would be as good as his word, and spared no occasion of *profuse Charity*, until he had reduced himself to one single piece, the whole remain of all his former riches. Now was he come to the *Crisis* of tryal, a *Crisis* able to shake even a *Christian courage*, and it did shake his indeed, though he had proceeded boldly hitherto without any fear or distrust. He began then to *murmur* and *repine*, and blamed his *Credulity*, for what he had so rashly, he thought, done; and in this pensive heart-breaking mood, he spied two men a quarelling and fighting. Notwithstanding his own *afflictions* he presently interposed, and demanded the cause of their so great difference. They answered that going along there they had found a *stone*, which both laid claim to, but could not agree which was the first discoverer, so that if he would bestow something for it, they told him it should be his. He gave them all he had, his one remaining piece, and so they went well contented with it. He presently repairs to a *Jeweller* to know the

value

value of his purchase, and was informed, that it was the best *Jewel* which belonged to the *High-Priests Breast-plate*, and that if he would carry it to the right owner, he need not doubt of a sufficient *recompence*. He goes to the *High-Priest*, acquaints him with what he had found, and the accidental occasion that brought him to such a Treasure. The *Man of God* roundly gave him first a box of the Ear, for distrusting *Providence*, and then dismissed him with a *reward* answerable to the occasion. From that fortunate day he thrived in such measure, and received the full satisfaction of all his former wishes, that notwithstanding the *Charitable* continuance of his former good intentions he soon grew to be one of the *richest* men in all *Judea*.

God never forsakes those that will *trust* in him. He will try them indeed whether they are in earnest, and how far they will venture to *trust* in him, but be assured he never leaves *man* in his *extremities*, unless he leaves his *God* first. And I have observed several instances of people that have been brought to the very brink of *ruin* and *despair*, who have been strangely and suddenly *advanced*, to the amazement of all their acquaintance, by the *immediate hand of Almighty God*. And if all *good people* in *affliction* do not find the same, 'tis their *duty* to *resign* themselves up to the *wise*, but *unaccountable* ways of *Providence*.

Now notwithstanding all that has been said, if any man will be so *Uncharitable*, as to think the

Current of the *Times* of late, and not my own *inclination* and *real judgement*, induced me to write these things, I must be *contented* to remain *unhappy* in his *opinion*; for no other Arguments can perswade him to alter. I am very well satisfied, that every man who thinks at all of *Religion*, has a *natural affection* for some one *Religion* above others, as he has for some *particular Person*; but if upon sober thoughts and familiar Conversation he finds the *Lady* he dotes too much upon to be either a *Strumpet*, or wretchedly *Painted*, or *Proud* and *Cruel*, especially if all these together, he is not to be blamed if he recalls his *extravagant passion*, and settles it rationally upon a *pure* and *unspotted*, a *mild* and *innocent*, and deservedly *amiable* object. There's great variety of tempers in Men, and these different *tempers* make Men *naturally incline* to as great variety in *Religions*. Some take to the *sowre* and *morose*, others are led with an *artificial show*, and with this most Men are apt to be insnar'd, till they find out the *Cheat*; some are taken with *licentious encouragements*, and others (the fewest of all) with an *honest naked truth*. Now if among these various attractions an *innocent well-meaning Man* happens to be awhile deluded, there's no such real wonder; but *God*'s *Grace* and *Providence* which over-looks Man-kind, and watches incessantly for the *good* of us *all*, is not like to pass by long those who are in no worse circumstance than that. How do we know but that these many different *Religions* are most agreeable to the *great end* of the *Creation*?

ation? When we cannot possibly see two *faces* alike, no nor any two things exactly so in all respects, must we fondly desire that all *Nations* in the World should be of one and the same *Opinion*? *God* says *Heresies* shall come (and no doubt remain too) that the *Faithful* may the better be *tried*; and for that reason I should rather suspect *Italy* and *Spain*, where are no *Dissenters* to *try* their *Faith*, than think *that blind forc'd Unity* makes so much for 'em. *Christian Gospel-liberty* cannot avoid *Dissenters*, the *Enemy* will sow his *Tares*; but the *Inquisition* gags the mouths of all who presume to *examine* any *whys or wherefores*.

One thing I shall adjoyn, and so conclude: When first I *return'd* to *Church*, *God* be *thanked*, I can *truly say*, I never did any thing with more *peace* and *assurance of mind*, or with more *inward comfort* to my *soul*, than that time at *Church*, which really to me is a most *comfortable reflection* as oft as it occurs.

Now may *Virtue* and *Charity* encrease among us all, and may the World grow more and more *sensible* of the *future* and *present benefit* of a *just*, *peaceable*, and *well-disposed Life*. Sir, I am,

Your most Humble,

and most Obedient Servant,

W. H.